The Research Alliance for New York City Schools

Strategies for Improving School Culture
Educator Reflections on Transforming the High School Experience for Black and Latino Young Men

Sarah Klevan
Adriana Villavicencio

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Researchers and practitioners increasingly recognize that positive school culture not only enhances students' day-to-day experiences, but also plays a role in raising student achievement.[1] Yet many schools struggle to create a welcoming and supportive schoolwide culture. Evidence indicates that students of color in particular—perhaps most notably Black and Latino young men—often face cultural barriers at school. For example, young men of color are highly overrepresented in disciplinary outcomes, tend to have weaker relationships with their teachers and less academically oriented relationships with peers, and often encounter lower expectations, compared to White and Asian students.[2]

How can educators address these barriers and develop a school culture that is more supportive, especially for Black and Latino young men? New York City's Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), an effort to improve college and career readiness for Black and Latino male students, has created an unusual opportunity for educators to wrestle with this challenge. Beginning in 2012, ESI provided 40 NYC high schools with financial resources and professional development to help them create or expand supports for young men of color. Many of the schools implemented strategies that were either implicitly or explicitly aimed at improving school culture.[3]

> ### What Is School Culture?
>
> Peterson and Deal (1998) describe school culture as "the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges."
>
> While many other definitions of school culture exist, we find this one to be particularly useful because of its emphasis on problem solving and confronting institutional challenges, which underscores the very concrete ways that cultural factors may affect the functioning of schools.

As part of the Research Alliance for New York City Schools' ongoing evaluation of ESI, we have conducted hundreds of interviews and focus groups with ESI teachers and administrators, as well as a handful of in-depth case studies in ESI schools (which included additional interviews, observations of programming, and student focus groups). This work has provided a unique lens on educators' efforts to strengthen their school's culture for Black and Latino male students.

This summary highlights strategies that ESI schools have used to:

- Develop culturally relevant education,
- Adopt restorative approaches to discipline,
- Promote strong in-school relationships, and
- Provide early support for students' post-secondary goals.

While these are areas of school culture that ESI educators have consistently pointed to as notable or promising (and that past research has suggested are generally relevant for young men of color), the strategies we describe are by no means universal, or even typical, across ESI schools. Furthermore, they can be challenging to implement and may require a fundamental shift in perspective for some educators: As noted in the textbox on page vi, these strategies depend heavily on teachers and administrators taking a reflective approach to their work, assuming a great deal of responsibility for student learning, and focusing on students' strengths. This summary is meant as an introduction to the strategies ESI schools used as they worked to improve school culture for young men of color. More detailed descriptions of the strategies are available in our full report.

Developing Culturally Relevant Education (CRE)

Why CRE?

Research suggests that students of color often experience a disconnect between their cultural backgrounds and their experiences in schools.[4] Indeed, educators in ESI schools reported that their Black and Latino male students came from backgrounds and neighborhoods that were sometimes vastly different from those of their teachers. In NYC, where more than 85 percent of public school students are racial "minorities," 59 percent of teachers are White (and 76 percent are female).[5] Culturally relevant education (CRE) attempts to engage and empower students by incorporating their cultural backgrounds in classrooms and focusing on issues that are relevant to their lives. CRE also aims to address underlying biases educators may have about their students.[6]

> **"There's an attitude that permeates the culture that these kids are at such a low level that we can't do a lot. I think that attitude puts so much of the emphasis on the students… Versus, 'Well, what can we [as educators] do to impact that?' I think that this emphasis on culturally relevant education has the potential to [change] that. Because then all of a sudden you're trying to look at these students… as individuals who have this range of experiences… Well, how do you use that to your advantage? How can you reach these young people who need to be reached and who could show tremendous growth, if we tried to address those issues the right way?" – Principal**

CRE Strategies

Staff at ESI schools had the chance to participate in a wide range of trainings focused on CRE. As a result of these trainings, educators reported making changes to their curriculum and instruction, aimed at:

- **Affirming student's cultural identities.** Many schools modified their curriculum with an eye toward affirming students' racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. This included selecting texts written by and/or featuring people of color and intentionally communicating positive messages about students' cultural backgrounds. One school, for example, displayed the names and images of Black scientists and discussed their contributions to the field. Another held schoolwide events celebrating the plethora of cultures represented at the school.

- **Making classrooms relevant to students' lives.** Teachers also reported weaving topics related to their students' lives into their instruction, especially current events affecting male students of color. For instance, several schools reported incorporating discussions about the Eric Garner case—in which police killed an unarmed Black man on Staten Island in 2014—into classrooms and lessons. In addition, educators described using different instructional strategies to better engage their students. They spoke about moving away from traditional lectures and presentations to more collaborative and creative student work and assessments, including hands-on activities, experiential learning, storytelling, group-based projects, and public speaking opportunities.

Changes Observed by Educators

In addition to changing instructional practices, many teachers also said their attitudes and beliefs about their students had evolved as a result of CRE training and practices. They reported greater understanding of and connection to their students. Some felt CRE had helped them better meet students' social and emotional needs—for example, by building students' self-esteem, making them feel valued, providing more leadership opportunities, and teaching students to advocate for themselves.

Adopting Restorative Approaches to Discipline

Why Restorative Approaches to Discipline?

Research demonstrates that disciplinary approaches that involve removing students from classrooms, such as suspensions, are correlated with a host of negative outcomes, including poor academic achievement, being held back a grade, dropping out of high school, and becoming involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.[7] Because minority males are overrepresented among students who are suspended from school, alternative approaches to

discipline that reduce the need for student removals may be key for improving educational outcomes among Black and Latino males.

Restorative Discipline Strategies

Restorative approaches encompass a wide range of practices but are generally oriented toward building strong in-school relationships, holding students accountable to their school community, and mediating conflicts.[8] Approaches used in ESI schools included:

- **Developing peer mediation and conflict resolution programs**. In one school, conflict prevention was incorporated into the curriculum of the school's peer-led advisory program. Peer leaders talked with their advisees about how to deal with conflicts that might arise among friends. Another school focused on its youth court program, an alternative to the school's regular disciplinary procedures that placed a strong emphasis on understanding *why* students misbehaved and identifying supports they might need to get back on track.

- **Adopting a new mindset about student discipline.** Educators emphasized that restorative approaches to discipline were more about a mindset than about specific programs or supports. The primary goals of restorative approaches, as identified by ESI schools, were to prevent unnecessary suspensions and to provide opportunities to repair harm to relationships or to the community. ESI educators prioritized building relationships with students as a way to manage behavior.

> **"We really try to get into the shoes of the student who has committed the infraction... no matter what the student did... [we] try to deep dive, so when we ask questions we really want to find out what is going on with the student and how to rehabilitate them... we try to get them to understand the consequences of the infraction on themselves and the community and try to get them to make a lifestyle change. We really, really take pride in that." – Youth Court Coordinator**

Changes Observed by Educators

Many school staff felt there had been notable changes in student behavior following the introduction of restorative approaches. Educators described students taking more responsibility for their schoolwork and displaying a greater awareness of behavioral expectations. Educators in about a quarter of ESI schools also reported that the use of suspensions and removals of students from classrooms had decreased.

Promoting Strong Relationships in Schools

Why Promote Relationships?

Evidence suggests that positive relationships in school—including student-teacher relationships and relationships between peers—contribute to students' success.[9] However, these relationships may be more elusive for boys than girls. Studies have shown that girls tend to have closer relationships with their teachers and more academically oriented relationships with peers.[10] Many schools participating in ESI saw the initiative as an opportunity to help their Black and Latino male students develop and strengthen in-school relationships.

Relationship-Building Strategies

Many ESI programs involved creating opportunities for students to spend time with each other and their teachers, and to get to know each other better—both inside and outside the classroom. Specific strategies included:

- **Mentoring programs**. About half of the ESI schools implemented some kind of formal mentoring program. Some used traditional one-on-one adult-student mentoring. Other schools introduced peer mentoring by pairing older male students (11th and 12th graders or recent alumni) with 9th and 10th graders. While the structure and content of these programs differed across schools, they shared an explicit focus on nurturing strong, supportive relationships.

- **Advisories.** Many ESI schools implemented advisories—classes in which students are able to talk openly about non-school issues. Advisory curricula covered a variety of topics, such as goal setting, communication skills and conflict resolution, bullying, and graduation requirements. Some schools offered advisories and brotherhood groups in single-gender environments.

Changes Observed by Educators

Educators in many ESI schools felt that these relationship-building efforts had paid off. They described teacher-student relationships that were increasingly positive and respectful, as well as improved relationships between students and their peers. Some school staff noted that as peer relationships developed, students began holding one another accountable for doing well in school.

> **"I saw with the seniors—the guys that left last year—and the juniors, study groups evolve just on their own… [they're] holding each other accountable. 'We gotta graduate. We're going to meet, and we're going to check in with each other. We're going to meet in the library.' I just saw things happen. We gave some pushes, but for the most part, things just evolved and grew on their own, which is good—really good." – Teacher**

What Core Values Undergird These Strategies?

In keeping with the definition of school culture cited above—as an "underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time"—our conversations with ESI educators pointed to several important underlying values that connect and help undergird the strategies described in this report:

Teaching as Reflective Practice – Most of the strategies described here could not be implemented solely through top-down policies or formal guidelines, but rather depend upon the willingness of educators to reflect on their own experiences, assumptions, and teaching practice. ESI educators emphasized, for example, that successfully integrating culturally relevant education requires teachers to reflect upon their own identities and biases. Likewise, when implementing restorative approaches to discipline, teachers reported thinking carefully about *why* their students were misbehaving, how to support them to be more successful, and, in some cases, how teachers' own behavior may have been contributing to conflicts with students.

Taking Responsibility for Student Learning and Success – The idea that the onus for student learning and success falls, in large part, on teachers and school leaders is embedded in many of the strategies described here. Educators took responsibility for getting to know their students and developing relationships that they could leverage to encourage good behavior and choices. Similarly, when integrating CRE into their schools, teachers assumed responsibility for making their curriculum engaging and relevant to students' lives.

Building on Student Strengths – ESI educators spoke at length about intentionally building on student strengths. Culturally relevant education encourages teachers to identify and promote students' assets, rather than blaming them for arriving in high school unprepared. Restorative approaches to discipline attempt to empower students to be part of the solution when problems arise. Efforts to improve relationships through peer advisories and peer mentoring explicitly draw on students' leadership capabilities. These approaches stand in stark contrast to the "deficit perspective" that prevails in many schools that serve low-income students of color, where the focus is often on the disadvantages the students face.

Providing Early Support for Students' Postsecondary Goals

Why Provide Early Support for Students' Postsecondary Goals?

While high school graduation rates for young men of color have risen dramatically, few of these students are leaving high school well prepared for college.[11] Compared to their peers, Black and Latino males are less likely to enroll in postsecondary education and much less likely to earn a degree; nationally, 26 percent of Black males and 18 percent of Latino males earn an associate degree or higher, compared to 41 percent of students overall.[12]

Educators in ESI schools reported that many of their Black and Latino male students had aspirations to go to college, but were unaware of the steps needed to get there. Often, when

the time came to apply, these students found that they were missing basic requirements. Some also struggled with other barriers, including a belief that college is not for them, difficulty navigating the college search and application process, financial obstacles, and insufficient academic preparation.

Strategies to Provide Early Support for Postsecondary Goals

Many participating schools used ESI resources to provide early exposure to and awareness of college. Indeed, 19 ESI schools reported beginning this work in the 9th grade, often by providing students with the opportunity to visit colleges and helping them set specific college-related goals. Other strategies included:

- **Communicating college expectations**. Many ESI educators shared that they had consciously shifted their focus from ensuring that students graduate high school to ensuring that they are ready for college. They reported using a variety of approaches to communicate these high expectations, including planning formal events and structures (e.g., college days, a bulletin board featuring colleges attended by alumni of the high school) and having frequent informal conversations with students about college options, goals, and experiences.

- **Focusing on the concrete steps involved in preparing and applying for college**. ESI schools offered a wide range of classes and workshops about college requirements and the college application process; instruction and support for filling out the FAFSA; and help obtaining recommendation letters, selecting colleges, and getting loans or financial aid. Starting early in students' high school careers, ESI educators worked to familiarize them with the college search and application process—and to break that process down into small, manageable steps.

> "As a faculty, we're more on the same page. We definitely understand the importance of promoting a college-going culture, which was not the case three years ago. As much as we wanted kids to go to college, we didn't understand how little they knew about college. Now I think, as a faculty, we're very clear. Our kids need more college talk to get them ready to go."
> – Teacher

- **Providing academic supports to keep students on track for college**. Some schools provided intensive test preparation for the New York State Regents exams, the PSAT, and/or the SAT. Other strategies included modifying course sequencing and programming so that students take more math and science; focusing writing instruction on college-level writing and research papers; and partnering with higher education institutions that allow high school students to take college classes and earn college credit.

Changes Observed by Educators

Educators in ESI schools perceived that these supports were helping students to see college as a realistic goal for themselves. A number of educators cited the trips to colleges and universities during 9th and 10th grade as particularly "eye-opening" for their Black and Latino male students. As a result, some educators reported that students had become more conscientious about short-term goals associated with college enrollment.

Conclusion

We do not yet know whether the strategies described here will translate into measureable academic gains. But given the growing recognition that many young men of color feel alienated rather than embraced by their school, as well as evidence that school culture is related to student achievement, these strategies certainly bear closer examination. ESI educators perceive that these approaches have strengthened relationships in schools, improved student behavior, reduced the use of suspensions, and encouraged a college-going identity for Black and Latino males. As part of our ongoing evaluation of ESI, it will be important for the Research Alliance to systematically explore these areas, in addition to examining ESI's impact on academic outcomes (e.g., grades, graduation rates, college-going rates). Have ESI schools in fact reduced the use of suspensions, for example? Do students in ESI schools report stronger relationships, more college knowledge, or more support for college-related goals than other students in similar, non-ESI high schools? Future Research Alliance reports will address these questions.

It is clear that educators have used ESI as an opportunity to focus deliberately on developing a school culture that welcomes and supports Black and Latino young men. We hope their experiences and perceptions offer valuable insight for other schools that are interested in the same goals.

Notes

[1] Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Bryk, et al., 2010; Thapa et al. 2013.

[2] Rudd, 2014; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Gershenson, Holt, & Papegeorge, 2015.

[3] While "school culture" is one of the three core domains of ESI (in addition to academics and youth development; see Klevan, Villavicencio, & Wulach, 2013 for details), we apply Peterson & Deal's definition of school culture throughout this report (see textbox on page vi).

[4] Gay, 2000; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994.

[5] NYC Independent Budget Office, 2014.

[6] Fergus, 2010; Rudd, 2014.

[7] Arcia, 2006; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; American Psychological Association, 2008; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008.

[8] NYC DOE 2013.

[9] Wells et al., 2011; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Haynie & Osgood, 2005.

[10] DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Giordano, 2003; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Wells et al., 2011; Hughes, 2001.

[11] Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, & Guidry, 2013.

[12] Ransom & Lee, 2012.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Researchers and practitioners increasingly recognize that a positive school culture not only enhances students' day-to-day experiences, but also plays a role in raising student achievement (Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Bryk, et al., 2010; Thapa et al. 2013). Yet many schools struggle to create a welcoming and supportive schoolwide culture. Evidence indicates that students of color in particular—perhaps most notably Black and Latino young men—often face cultural barriers at school. For example, young men of color are vastly overrepresented in disciplinary outcomes, generally have weaker relationships with their teachers and less academically oriented relationships with peers, and often encounter lower expectations, compared to White and Asian students (Rudd, 2014; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; McKown & Weinstein, 2002; Gershenson, Holt, & Papegeorge, 2015).

New York City's Expanded Success Initiative (ESI), an effort to improve college and career readiness for Black and Latino male students, has created an unusual opportunity for educators to address these barriers. Launched in 2012 by the NYC Department of Education (DOE), in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies and the Open Society Foundations, ESI has provided 40 NYC high schools with financial resources and professional development to help them create or expand supports for young men of color. Many of the schools implemented strategies that were either implicitly or explicitly aimed at improving school culture.[1]

The Research Alliance for New York City Schools is conducting an independent evaluation of ESI's implementation and impact. As part of this evaluation, we have conducted interviews and focus groups with educators across all 40 ESI schools; we have also carried out in-depth case studies in a handful of schools, including observations of programming and student focus groups. This report draws on those sources to provide rich descriptions of how schools changed their school environments in response to ESI and the results that educators observed as stemming from these changes.[2]

School culture is an elusive concept, defined in myriad ways within the field of education research. Scholars have used the term to refer to everything from school safety to high academic expectations to social and emotional learning (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Bryk et al. 2010). In this report, we rely on the work of Peterson and Deal (1998), who propose that school culture is "the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges." We appreciate this definition because of its focus on problem solving and confronting institutional challenges; this emphasis suggests the very concrete ways that school culture may affect the functioning of schools.

While research has identified improving school culture as a promising approach for raising student achievement (Kraft, Marinell, & Yee, 2016; Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014; Bryk, et al., 2010), fewer studies have described specific strategies used by educators and school administrators to improve their school culture. Fewer still have looked at these

efforts through the lens of attempting to serve Black and Latino male students more effectively. Studying ESI offers a critical opportunity to learn about the strategies schools have used to shift their culture as a way to better support this group of often underserved students.

Our discussion of school culture focuses on four areas: culturally relevant education, restorative approaches to discipline, in-school relationships, and support for postsecondary success. Of course, these are not the *only* important aspects of school culture, but research indicates that these elements are particularly relevant for boys of color (Fergus, 2010; Rudd, 2014; Noguera, 2003; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Ransom & Lee, 2012). They have also all been consistent areas of focus for ESI schools throughout the first three years of the initiative, prevalent across each year of our data collection and analysis. While these are areas of school culture that many ESI educators have pointed to as notable or promising (and that they believe improved due to ESI), the strategies we describe in the report are by no means universal, or even typical, across ESI schools. Furthermore, they can be challenging to implement and may require a fundamental shift in perspective for some educators: As we discuss in the conclusion, these strategies depend heavily on teachers and administrators taking a reflective approach to their work, assuming a great deal of responsibility for student learning, and focusing on students' strengths.

It is also important to note that we do not yet know how the strategies we describe will influence the target outcomes of the initiative (e.g., improvements in college readiness, attendance, grade point averages, or college enrollment). We are continuing to examine ESI's effects in these areas and will present the findings in a future report. The purpose of this report, by contrast, is to shed light on the experiences and perspectives of those who are closest to the implementation of ESI, and to document the strategies they used as they worked to improve their school culture.

Because our definition of school culture highlights the centrality of confronting challenges, we focus on how schools identified problems facing their male students of color and the efforts they made to resolve those problems. In each of the four areas of school culture discussed in the report, we describe:

Look for This Icon:

Challenges for Black and Latino males identified by research literature and ESI school actors;	
Strategies used by schools to address these problems;	
Outcomes reported by schools as a result of these strategies; and	
A closer look at an individual school's approach in action.	

The Research Alliance's Evaluation of ESI

The Research Alliance has been conducting a mixed-methods longitudinal evaluation of ESI since its inception in 2012. Our study aims to answer the following questions:

- What services and supports do schools plan and implement under ESI? What challenges do schools confront as they implement the new ESI services, and how do they address those challenges?

- What is the impact of ESI on the attendance rates, academic performance, progress toward graduation, and college readiness of Black and Latino young men?

- How does ESI affect key social and emotional competencies, including critical thinking, academic self-concept, and the level of "college knowledge" among Black and Latino young men?

To answer these questions, we are conducting interviews and focus groups with students, teachers, and administrators at all 40 participating schools, in each of the four years of the initiative. We are also surveying students and drawing on student records to compare ESI students' academic outcomes and social and emotional skills with those of students in similar high schools that did not participate in the initiative. Finally, we are conducting in-depth case studies in a small set of ESI schools, including additional interviews and program observations.

Ultimately, we hope to discover the extent to which ESI—and the specific programs undertaken by ESI schools—have improved college readiness and other important outcomes for Black and Latino males, including the potential to replicate successful strategies in other NYC schools and around the country.

Other reports from our evaluation include:

- *Moving the Needle* (2013), which examined the trajectory of Black and Latino males on their path to college, describing the key contextual factors that underlie their educational outcomes and highlighting opportunities to provide them with better support.
  http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/moving_the_needle

- *Preparing Black and Latino Young Men for College and Careers* (2013), which described the key components of ESI, the 40 schools that were selected to participate in the initiative, and the strategies they planned to implement during the first year.
  http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_baseline

- *Promising Opportunities for Black and Latino Young Men* (2014), which looked at ESI's first year of implementation, highlighting changes that ESI schools made in Year 1, particularly practices that held promise for reaching ESI's goals.
  http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_year1

- *Changing How High Schools Serve Black and Latino Young Men* (2015), which focused on Year 2 of ESI, presenting new implementation findings, as well as preliminary information about ESI's impact on a set of academic outcomes and social and emotional skills.
  http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_year2

- *Culturally Relevant Education: A Guide for Educators* (2016) and *Early Exposure to and Preparation for College: A Guide for Educators* (2016), which draw on ESI schools' experiences to provide concrete tips, tools, resources, and examples for other educators interested in undertaking similar strategies.
  http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/esi_guides_for_educators

CHAPTER 2: DEVELOPING CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATION

Why Implement CRE?

Many who have studied the achievement gap observe that students of color often experience a disconnect between their cultural backgrounds and their experiences in schools (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1994) and argue that this disconnect may help explain why some students are less likely to engage and excel academically. In contrast, practitioners of culturally relevant education (CRE) focus on students' cultures and on issues that are relevant to their lives, in an effort to increase student confidence and engagement—two factors that are positively associated with student achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2000; Nieto & Bode, 2004). CRE also aims to address underlying biases educators may have about their students—particularly Black and Latino males—which can further alienate students and appear to contribute to stark disparities in the use of suspensions and other disciplinary actions (Fergus, 2010; Rudd, 2014).

In line with this literature, educators in ESI schools reported that their Black and Latino male students came from backgrounds and neighborhoods that were sometimes vastly different from those of their teachers and their school environment. In NYC, where more than 85 percent of public school students are racial "minorities," 59 percent of teachers are White (and 76 percent are female) (NYC Independent Budget Office, 2014). One teacher explained, "A lot of the young men, we feel like they're on the periphery of what's being taught. These students come in sometimes with very—not necessarily negative—just very different experiences. Often times the classroom is an alien place." In addition, staff said that their male students of color often struggled with how others perceived them, including authority figures and their own teachers. A school leader said, "Many of our students come in with either negative or scarred experiences with teachers that didn't necessarily give them the support that they needed." Receiving negative messages about who they are because of their race and gender, staff pointed out, was disempowering and could alienate students from their teachers and their schools.

Bringing CRE into ESI Schools

CRE has been defined broadly as a pedagogy that empowers students by incorporating their cultural backgrounds in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). This includes providing ample opportunities to succeed in the classroom, offering a curriculum that is relevant to students' everyday lives, and creating an environment that affirms their cultural backgrounds. Moreover, CRE aims to facilitate

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students' ability to think critically about systems of power that perpetuate inequities (Dover, 2013). In this way, CRE is not just about textbooks and pedagogy, but also represents a "firm commitment to social justice education and seeing the classroom as a site for social change" (Aronson & Laughter, 2015, p. 5).

CRE is an essential component of ESI. Early in the initiative, the DOE's central ESI staff took several actions to emphasize the importance of CRE, including: 1) facilitating a CRE-focused symposium for all 40 schools in the first year of ESI, 2) providing intensive CRE training to a group of 10 ESI schools, 3) generating and disseminating a list of individuals/organizations who could provide CRE training, and 4) offering summer workshops on CRE across the core subject areas, open to staff from ESI schools.

All 40 schools participated in the three-hour CRE symposium offered in the initiative's first year. In addition, 36 of the 40 schools participated in some type of CRE training in Year 2 or Year 3. ESI schools utilized a wide range of CRE trainings, resources, and experts, including Advancement via Individual Determination (AVID), Brotherhood Sister Sol, Coalition for Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC), Facing History and Ourselves, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, Michelle Knight (Teachers College), Umoja Community, and Undoing Racism: The People's Institute for Survival Beyond. These trainings varied, and our data does not allow us to assess the quality of each.

However, to provide a clearer picture of what CRE training often entails, we can describe some of the common topics covered by these trainings. Many of the trainings had a strong focus on academic expectations, including creating opportunities for students to succeed (e.g., by attending to multiple learning styles and using varied assessments) and promoting a growth mindset (i.e., the belief that intelligence can be developed through practice and effort) among students. Trainings also provided teachers with strategies for making curriculum and instruction more relevant to students' cultures, backgrounds, and prior experiences. A few trainings also spoke to the "critical consciousness" element of CRE by exploring opportunities for students to develop a critical stance toward inequitable systems, study examples of social action, and participate in change movements. Finally, some of the trainings challenged teachers to acknowledge their own privilege, confront their own biases against male students of color, and more deeply examine data about Black and Latino male performance in their own schools.

Related Resource

Assignment: U.S. Government Civil Rights Research Essay (Page 33)

Changes in Teacher Practice and Attitudes toward Black and Latino Males

In Year 3 of ESI (i.e., the 2014-2015 school year), principals and teachers in 25 ESI schools reported that, as a result of CRE training, changes had been made to their curriculum and instruction as well as their mindsets and beliefs about their students. While many educators, especially school leaders, acknowledged that their schools are still developing CRE capacity, there are signs that these changes are becoming part of schools' overall approach to educating boys of color.

Affirming students' cultural identities. One of the ways many schools initially responded to CRE training was to modify their curriculum with an eye toward affirming students' race, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds. In nine schools, educators reported selecting books and texts (both fiction and nonfiction) written by people of color and/or featuring male protagonists of color, including *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros; *Forged by Fire* by Sharon Draper; *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry; and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* as told to Alex Haley. One teacher explained:

> *We have a certain amount in the budget for getting more books each year. Having us shift away from Walt Whitman to Ernesto Quiñonez…. The variety in our bookroom here is something I've not seen before. I'm used to the dead White men. I mean, I was brought up on the canon. I studied the canon, I know the canon. It's refreshing to see authors that reflect people who look like me.*

Teachers reported that expanding their text selection in this way engaged male students of color, who might have shown less interest in some of the books typically taught in these schools. In addition to providing classroom materials that reflected their students' backgrounds, teachers also were more deliberate about communicating positive messages about students' cultural backgrounds. One school, for example, displayed the names and images of Black scientists and discussed their contributions to the field. Another held schoolwide events celebrating the plethora of cultures represented by their students. A third school created a project centered on students' identities; this "Who Am I" project required students to explore their history, ancestors, and families. As the principal described:

> *They do family trees; they do research with their parents, parent interviews… [They explore] "Who are our ancestors and what are the really powerful things that happened that have allowed us to be here today." There's this sense, and that's all intentional—a part of this healing process—of "before we were slaves, we were kings and queens."*

Making classrooms relevant to students' lives. Teachers in 20 schools, across subjects, reported incorporating topics related to their students' lives, especially current events affecting male students of color. Staff reported focusing curricula and lesson plans on race, poverty, and events such as the "Central Park Five" case, in which five young men of color

were convicted of a crime they didn't commit. Several schools reported incorporating discussions about the Eric Garner case—in which police killed an unarmed Black man on Staten Island in 2014—into classrooms and lessons. One principal said, "If you know that the Eric Garner issue is burning in the community, how can we take a current and relevant event into the classroom and apply it [to] what we're doing?" A teacher in another school made a similar point:

> I think that when opportunities present themselves through the law classes and through the history classes, we seize those moments. They're teachable moments. You can't get them back. For example, when the indictment—well, lack of indictment—[in Ferguson[3]] came back, I set aside whatever I had planned because the idea was whatever I taught them that day, in 20 years they'll forget. If I took the time to talk about what had happened and actually let them talk about what had happened and ask questions that they didn't know who to ask or where to get the answers, that's something that they were going to walk away with and that was going be something meaningful to them that they were going to carry much further than the causes of the Civil War.

Educators in 12 schools also reported using different instructional strategies to better engage their students. They described moving away from traditional lectures and presentations to more collaborative and creative student work and assessments, including hands-on activities, experiential learning, storytelling, group-based projects, and public speaking opportunities. Many of these strategies entail giving more ownership of the classroom experience to students, which staff saw as valuable preparation for college. One teacher described:

> [I use] student-centered learning where children are accountable and responsible for their own learning. They're leading class discussion. They're doing the group presentation and they're working off what each other's research is and what they have found. [It's about] getting them to sort of monitor themselves as far as how a classroom should run and how a discussion should run. The key push from [our teachers] has been [to show students that] when you go to college and you find yourself as one of two or three Brown or Black individuals in a room, that you're capable of competing, if not outperforming, those around, and not be reluctant or reticent to participate.

Several teachers also described incorporating social media into their instruction in response to youth culture and their students' use of technology and digital platforms to express themselves. For example, one teacher had students create Instagram pages for historical figures.

Teachers in many ESI schools are exploring ways to leverage students' existing interests and expertise to help make classrooms come alive. As a result, principals noted that they had seen changes in pedagogy and instruction when they visited classrooms. One said, "I

see teachers really trying to make connections to student lives, and to current events that make that a little bit more tangible, and the curriculum more tangible to students."

In combination, the approaches described above speak to a larger shift among teachers, who appear to be taking more direct responsibility for engaging students rather than perceiving students' lack of engagement as lack of motivation. They also represent an approach that shifts the focus to how teachers can facilitate student success by building on students' strengths, and away from blaming students for entering high school unprepared. As one principal said, "It's incumbent on our teachers to find ways to make the curriculum connect to our students, to communicate with our students in such a way that they understand and take an interest in it."

Changing teacher mindsets. As part of the increased focus on CRE, staff in 17 schools reported greater understanding of and connection to their students. They described learning about their students' backgrounds, cultural and religious differences, struggles at home, challenges around gender issues, and specific interests as individuals. Some of the educators we spoke to talked about CRE in terms of its capacity to help teachers better meet students' social and emotional needs. Examples included building boys' self-esteem, helping students feel valued, providing more leadership opportunities, encouraging public speaking, and teaching young men to advocate for their needs.

This orientation is notable for its contrast with what is known as a "deficit perspective," an attitude often found in schools serving low-income students of color that focuses on the *disadvantages* of these students, rather than the strengths and positive qualities they bring to their education. One principal explained:

> *I think that in some ways there's an attitude that permeates the culture that these kids are at such a low level that we can't do a lot. I think that attitude puts so much of the emphasis on the students. Like, "They came to us like this. It's not our fault. Look how low level they are." Versus, "Well, what can we do to impact that?" I think that this emphasis on culturally relevant education has the potential to do that. Because then all of a sudden you're trying to look at these students, not as this group that are low level, but rather as individuals who have this range of experiences that are coming into your classroom. Well, how do you use that to your advantage? How can you reach these young people who need to be reached and who could show tremendous growth if we tried to address those issues the right way?*

CRE has also challenged staff to confront their own biases and critically examine how teachers perceive Black and Latino males. The evidence suggests that CRE training has allowed educators to address stigmas often attached to young men of color, helped develop more racial consciousness among school staff, and made it more acceptable to talk about race with students and colleagues.

One ESI school took advantage of an existing Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure to expand and sustain the presence of CRE. Every member of the school's staff is part of one of five PLCs that meet weekly to discuss a particular topic (e.g., college and career readiness, social emotional support). Six educators from this school had participated in a 10-week CRE session with Michelle Knight from Teachers College. After the training, the school decided to devote one of the PLCs to CRE, which has allowed the school to extend CRE learning and approaches to the whole staff.

Educators in the CRE PLC use an inquiry process to examine the extent to which they are engaging in CRE and offer suggestions to each other about ways to make their curriculum and instruction more culturally relevant. The PLC members also share CRE resources and strategies with other teachers at staff-wide professional development sessions. The existence of a CRE PLC reflects the school's commitment to institutionalizing CRE as a widespread practice, not restricted to those who have received formal training. One school leader explained, "[The PLC] kind of gave us time to talk together and understand the importance of having the school invested [in CRE]; it can't just be a small pocket of activity." The PLCs can also be powerful because they are led by teachers, which may help promote buy-in among others on the teaching staff.

Teachers in the CRE PLC spoke at length about how a schoolwide focus on CRE has challenged teachers to talk about race in ways they might not have felt comfortable with before. One acknowledged that, prior to CRE training, he was "afraid of those topics." Teachers now have the space and language to navigate the topic of race with each other and, in turn, with students. One described:

> I think most of the time the schools have been perceived as this—quote, unquote—neutral zone, where there's no politics. We just focus on academics. ESI has allowed the political dimension to be acknowledged. There's now a language that people can use to talk about these things. When we went to a presentation and you hear [ESI's director] talk about racism and I hear him talk about police brutality… it's acceptable to talk about that in an academic setting. It's not typically been the case, and I think among the teachers, now there's at least some comfort level with people using a word like racism, where usually you can't even say that word.

Beyond the PLC, CRE has permeated this school's culture in a number of ways. For example, the school has begun using data in staff meetings to confront the unique challenges facing male students. School leaders reported that initially some staff questioned ESI's focus on Black and Latino boys; they didn't see a need to specifically emphasize their male students. One tactic school leaders used to address this resistance was to generate data reports about the graduation rates, grades, and credit accumulation of their male students, which were shared during regular staff meetings. Once teachers were able to see the

discrepancies between the performance of their female and male students, they were more likely to understand the importance of being intentional about how to better serve boys (although some of their programs now serve female students as well).

Leaders at the school take responsibility for making sure CRE is permeating classrooms. When they conduct classroom observations, leaders look for evidence of CRE, particularly as it relates to making instruction relevant and engaging for boys. School leaders ask teachers to think about how often their boys are participating in class and whether they are engaging male and female students equally.

Finally, teachers talked about the importance of incorporating current events into classroom instruction, particularly those that are germane to young men of color, including "stop and frisk" policies, police brutality, and the criminal justice system's response to the deaths of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO and Eric Garner in NYC. Teachers in different subject areas designed classroom projects around these issues. For example, one class used the Socratic Seminar method (in which students facilitate discussion based on a shared text) to discuss questions raised by the shooting of Tamir Rice in Cleveland, OH, including media coverage. Educators shared that encouraging students to think and talk through these kinds of events in class can be empowering and meaningful for students approaching adulthood.

CHAPTER 3: ADOPTING RESTORATIVE APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE

Why Implement Restorative Approaches to Discipline?

Research on disciplinary outcomes has consistently documented that, compared with other students, minority males are much more likely to be suspended, expelled, or otherwise removed from class (Insley, 2001; Noguera, 2003). For example, Black students comprise 33 percent of all students in New York City schools but accounted for 53 percent of all suspensions over the past 10 years (New York Civil Liberties Union, 2011). The instructional time students lose due to removal policies is very likely harmful in and of itself, given the well documented relationship between student achievement and time engaged in academic learning (Gregory et al., 2010). Indeed, research demonstrates that school removals, such as suspensions, are correlated with a host of negative outcomes for students, including poor academic achievement, being held back a grade, dropping out of high school, and becoming involved in the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Arcia, 2006; Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2010; American Psychological Association, 2008; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). Because minority males are overrepresented among students who are suspended from school, alternative approaches to discipline that reduce the need for student removals may be key for improving educational outcomes among Black and Latino males.

Consistent with the research documenting inequities in disciplinary outcomes, educators in ESI schools described disproportionate rates of suspension and disciplinary referrals for Black and Latino young men at their schools, indicating an awareness of the need to adapt disciplinary approaches to better serve these students and keep them engaged in school. Explained one principal:

One of the deans just brought up to me…and this was definitely, I would say, the effect of going to these trainings and thinking about restorative justice—[that] if you look at the list of the kids who get kicked out of class and never get asked back, those tend to be predominantly… Black boys. We need to think about that as a school and what is happening. That's come up in conversations that teachers have had with me and that the deans have had with me this year in particular.

Another principal shared that alternative disciplinary approaches were needed at his school in order to reduce the number of suspensions experienced by Black and Latino young men:

That's why we incorporated [alternative approaches in] our discipline system instead of it being mostly punitive. Now [students] have a chance to do things the right way and rebuild relationships in the building. I think that that's really important. Also, with [this approach], Latino and African American males or males of color [are] not being suspended at such a high rate, [which] keeps them in the building. If you get suspended every other week, statistics show—

the school to prison pipeline shows—that if you get suspended often, you're more likely to end up in prison after.

These school leaders explicitly acknowledged that disparities in disciplinary outcomes for young men of color were a problem in their own schools. In response, about a quarter of ESI schools adopted restorative approaches to discipline.

Restorative Approaches in ESI Schools

The New York City Department of Education defines restorative approaches in the following way (NYC DOE, 2013):

A restorative approach can be used as both a prevention and intervention measure. Restorative processes can help schools build relationships and empower community members to take responsibility for the wellbeing of others; prevent or deal with conflict before it escalates; address underlying factors that lead youth to engage in inappropriate behavior and build resiliency; increase the pro-social skills of those who have harmed others; and provide wrong doers with the opportunity to be accountable to those they have harmed and enable them to repair the harm to the extent possible.

This definition encompasses a wide range of practices including conflict resolution training, peer mediation, youth courts, and conscious efforts to build relationships between and among staff and students (discussed further in Chapter 4). ESI schools implemented a variety of programs that fall within this range. Several schools developed peer mediation and conflict prevention programs. In one school, conflict prevention was incorporated into the curriculum of the school's peer-led advisory program. Peer leaders talked with their advisees about how to deal with conflicts that might arise among friends (e.g., gossip on social media). This school also offered a peer mediation program in which a dozen students received training in mediating conflicts between their peers. The principal of the school explained that this approach empowers students to address problems that arise:

The basis of [peer mediation] is allowing students to handle conflicts or things that could lead to bigger conflicts amongst themselves. They are trained by staff, but it gives them an alternative to just having adults in the school tell them what to do, which I think is pretty interesting.

Another ESI school placed substantial emphasis on its youth court program. The youth court is operated by trained students in the upper grades and provides an alternative to the school's regular disciplinary procedures. The school's principal estimated that the court heard about 30 cases in an academic year. The youth court is an opt-in system, meaning that students who have been referred for some sort of disciplinary action can choose bring their 'case' before the court. By

Related Resource

Program Description: Restorative Justice Panels (Page 35)

opting-in, both the student and the school administration agree to set aside the school's regular disciplinary process and allow a jury of the student's peers to make an official decision about the student's behavior and an appropriate consequence. Students who lead the court participate in a daily class in which they do mock trials and prepare for cases brought by their peers. As the youth court coordinator explained, the program places a strong emphasis on figuring out what caused students to misbehave and what supports they might need to get back on track:

> *We really try to get into the shoes of the student who has committed the infraction. The way that I train the students is to—no matter what the student did, they could have, you know punched the teacher in the face—we really try to deep dive, so when we ask questions we really want to find out what is going on with the student and how to rehabilitate them so… we focus on the infraction, but we try to get them to understand the consequences of the infraction on themselves and the community and try to get them to make a life style change. We really, really, take pride in that.*

Educators emphasized that restorative approaches to discipline were more about a mindset than about a specific set of programs or supports. The primary goals of restorative approaches, as identified by ESI schools, were to prevent unnecessary suspensions and to provide opportunities to repair harm to relationships or to the community. Some ESI schools used practices other than student programming to work toward these goals. One school, for example, collected and analyzed meticulous data about which students were referred for disciplinary action and by which teachers in order to identify students or teachers who might need support. Explained the principal:

> *So the idea is that if there's some issue in class then there's some issue that has to be solved for the kid. So [the dean] does an intake, starts talking, finds out [what happened], we record all the data. I mean two years ago, we found out [that] 55, 60 percent of our incidents sent to the [dean's office] were coming from two teachers. They, this year, are down to, like, under five between the two of them because we worked with them.*

Another school specifically focused on students who had received multiple disciplinary referrals through a "suspension prevention intervention." This school arranged meetings for these students with the school's restorative justice coordinators, in an effort to determine what was causing the misbehavior and help the student correct course so that a suspension could be avoided.

Changes in Teacher Practices

ESI schools reported changes in both teacher and administrator behavior as a result of alternative disciplinary approaches. One principal described teachers interacting with students in notable new ways:

Just trying to approach them more outside of class if there are issues and just devoting more time to trying to develop a relationship, so that we can have a more fruitful relationship in the classroom and to build more trust.

Many educators echoed this perspective, demonstrating awareness that strong teacher-student relationships are a crucial element of improving student behavior in school.

Educators also reported fewer suspensions and removals of students from classrooms:

I think student removal from classes has significantly dropped as well as [use of] the principal['s] suspension.[4] I think we moved along with just implementing more progressive discipline and working more with our dean's department to… use progressive discipline, as opposed to jumping to a principal['s] suspension or anything along that line.

Perceived Improvements in Student Behavior

Following the introduction of restorative approaches, some school staff perceived notable changes in student behavior in school. One principal explained that his students were "making better choices," which he elaborated on in the following way:

It's reflected in the type of behavior that [they] exhibit, and also them being more responsible for the academics and, like I said, their behavior. When you see someone that knows that he's expected to be here at a certain here, that he's expected to be doing work in particular classes, and that when we have meetings in the afternoon, let's say at the end of the day, that they [attend these] meeting[s]. That shows that they actually are not only motivated… [but] that they have actually acquired what we expect of them.

A teacher from another school also described the ways in which her students' behavior had improved:

The thing I see the most with the eleventh grade Black and Latino males in my classroom is they really are now getting accountability for their actions. They know that there [are] consequences for their actions. They know that there's a certain tone that has to be had in the classroom, there's a certain… etiquette that has to be performed.

According to these school staff members, restorative approaches have substantially shifted the culture of their schools in ways that have improved the learning environment, particularly for male students of color.

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES IN ACTION

For one ESI school in Manhattan, restorative approaches to discipline were a central element of staff's efforts to improve outcomes for Black and Latino males. Explained one teacher:

> We've really invested in restorative justice, which is a program where it's less about punishing… bad behavior and more about addressing bad behavior and figuring out how to remedy [it], and thinking about how it affects the community. I think… it's been much more responsive to our Black and Latino males because, [with] restorative justice, we asked them to become a part of the solution.

The school introduced restorative approaches to discipline beginning in the 2012-2013 school year (the first year of ESI) with the explicit goals of decreasing the use of suspensions and student removals from class, improving student behavior, reducing incidents of violence, and strengthening the school community through improved relationships.

To implement restorative approaches to discipline, this school hired a restorative justice coordinator, provided professional development sessions for teachers about restorative justice techniques, and recruited and trained approximately 20 students to join the school's "restorative justice league." The restorative justice coordinator intentionally recruited students for the league who were strong leaders but not necessarily seen as model students because of their behavior. She thought these students would benefit the most from learning about restorative practices and would be the most effective at working with other students who had been referred to the dean's office because of their behavior. A teacher at the school described how participating in the restorative justice league had affected a particular student:

> There's one student… that I [have] known [since] his freshman year. He's a very smart, intelligent student, and he was definitely a student that was on our radar for misbehavior. Now he's a part of the restorative justice league, and he facilitates those situations… where students have had conflict, and he helps to resolve it. It's really interesting what he does. He's learned how to listen to the conflicts. I know that the restorative justice coordinator has been really impressed with the work that he has done.

Restorative approaches at this school include formal and informal practices. Among the informal practices are a range of efforts to help students feel valued and included. For example, rather than saying, "Hurry up! You are late!" if a student is running behind, teachers at this school typically say, "We need you. The class is not complete without you." Whereas in the past, teachers might have reacted punitively to student lateness, they now respond by emphasizing how important the student is to their classroom community.

The school has also established a collective goal of keeping students in classrooms. Therefore, rather than removing students from class because they have misbehaved or been disrespectful, teachers are

encouraged to hold impromptu one-on-one conferences with students, reach a common understanding, and resolve conflicts together. This helps students stay in class and not miss crucial instructional time. Often, these informal conferences can be conducted in a matter of minutes while a co-teacher instructs the rest of the class or students do independent work.

More formal practices include the use of restorative conferences (also called "circles") to resolve conflicts. Restorative circles are facilitated by trained staff and/or students and follow an established line of questioning that allows all parties to express their views on what happened, who was affected by the situation, and what can be done to repair any harm that was caused by the conflict. Depending on the incident that is being discussed in the circle, participants may include teachers, students, parents, and/or school safety agents. Circles are used for issues that cannot be solved with a quick discussion. For example, any time a student is removed from class (because an impromptu conference was impossible or unsuccessful), it is expected that the teacher who removed the student participate in a facilitated restorative conference with the student. Circles might also be used to diffuse a conflict between a teacher and student or (in addition to a suspension) to address a physical altercation between students. In some instances, circles are used preventatively so that teachers can talk to students who are falling behind or disengaging in class.

Importantly, this school has not abandoned the use of suspensions or classroom removals. The school continues to use these disciplinary measures for extreme situations (e.g., a physical altercation between students) but has added a range of restorative practices that can be used in lieu of or in combination with traditional disciplinary approaches.

CHAPTER 4: PROMOTING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS IN SCHOOLS

Why Focus on Building Relationships?

There is evidence that positive in-school relationships, including those between students and staff and between students and their peers, contribute to overall success in school. For example, positive relationships between peers have been linked to improved student behavior, preventing school drop-out, and increased college-going (Wells et al., 2011; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Haynie & Osgood, 2005). Researchers have also found a significant association between the quality of student-teacher relationships and a range of positive student outcomes, including engagement in learning, academic expectations, and college enrollment (Hallinan, 2008; Wells, et al, 2011; Riegle-Crumb 2010).

Educators in ESI schools generally reported that relationships between students and school staff, as well as relationships between students and their peers, were strong even before the onset of ESI. Still, a majority of these educators saw the initiative as an opportunity to nurture in-school relationships because many ESI programs and supports (including home visits, advisories, mentoring programs, and team building activities) involved students and teachers spending time together outside of the classroom. As a result of these efforts, staff in ESI schools reported that relationships did in fact improve, which many saw as a necessary precursor for growth in other areas, such as student engagement, academic performance, and behavior.

Strategies to Build Relationships in ESI Schools

A majority of ESI schools incorporated programming that emphasized relationship development. Approximately half of the ESI schools implemented a formal mentoring program (either adult-student mentoring or peer mentoring). Advisories (i.e., classes in which students are able to address non-school issues in their lives) were implemented in over a quarter of ESI schools, providing opportunities for relationship development. As one educator described:

> *What I… noticed was that in the beginning [the advisory] was a study hall, basically. Then, after a while, they did form relationships with each other… As it progressed, I felt that advisory… started serving a purpose, even if [it was] just as a place to socially interact with each other. In that aspect, there was definitely more socializing on a positive basis, based on them being in this class together.*

Advisory curricula allowed students to discuss a variety of topics, such as goal setting, communication skills and conflict resolution, bullying, and graduation requirements.

Some other programs aimed at building relationships were used in smaller numbers of ESI schools; these included visits to students' homes, team building activities such as field trips that incorporated ropes courses and group challenges, and enrichment activities that allowed students and staff to spend time together outside of classroom settings.

Nurturing relationships may be particularly important in the context of ESI's focus on supporting male students. Research has indicated that, generally, girls have closer relationships with their teachers and more academically oriented relationships with their peers than boys do (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013; Giordano, 2003; Riegle-Crumb, 2010; Wells et al., 2011; Hughes, 2001). Furthermore, research on schools that achieve positive outcomes for Black and Latino males suggests that strong relationships between teachers and students are a crucial element of their success (Fergus, Noguera, & Martin, 2014).

Many ESI schools offered mentorship programs, advisories, and brotherhood groups in a single-gender context. Staff in nearly a quarter of ESI schools emphasized the need to create spaces for Black and Latino male students to discuss issues particularly relevant to them, such as interacting with police and other authority figures, sexual health, and romantic relationships. Below, a teacher explains the value of the relationship students have developed with an adult mentor through a weekly boys' group.

Related Resource

Event Description: Male Youth Empowerment Symposium (Page 37)

The boys' group that happens—it's a nice dynamic because it allows the boys an opportunity to speak to someone who grew up in the same environment, who actually attended the same high school as them, who is very honest with them and giving them real conversations about real world things that are going on. College being a big one of them, as well as just outside issues and making them… more aware, especially as they transition into 12th grade and beyond, as they really need to think about what's going on in the outside world and not living in a box of just what's happening in school.

Improved Relationships in ESI Schools

Over half of the ESI schools reported improved relationships between teachers and students as well as students and their peers. In one ESI school, each teacher is assigned a small group of students to "coach" during the teacher's free period. The principal was enthusiastic about the results of this program:

[Coaches] are building this deep relationship with [students]. Nothing warms my heart more than when I see across the hall and students' faces glow when they see their coach. They're excited to see their coach. They're excited to see the progress they've made in their academics. I love the coaching program.

A teacher in another school described changes that she has noticed with respect to relationships between teachers and students:

My interactions with the students are pretty positive. Like I said, with especially, obviously, the 11ᵗʰ grade boys, I see a huge difference from last year. While sometimes they're not always perfect—they're teenagers—I definitely see a big difference from last year. A little bit more self-control, a little bit more of that mutual respect. They understand that—and of course, it's not always perfect, but it's definitely an improvement from last year. They seem to have a little bit more respect for other people.

With a similar frequency, schools reported positive changes in relationships between students and their peers. One educator described the impact of the school's Outward Bound program through this lens:

We focused on team building and character education and leadership stuff. I definitely see the change with the students. Our upperclassmen, you could see them getting along with the freshmen and the sophomores. They built a relationship.

Asked to describe any changes associated with the implementation of ESI, another teacher explained:

What I saw the most of was the camaraderie that existed between the boys… I don't know— an openness and a closeness that—I've been teaching for eight years, and I don't think I've ever seen that before.

Staff in nearly a quarter of ESI schools felt that improved relationships had contributed to a greater sense of accountability among students. Explained one teacher:

I saw with the seniors—the guys that left last year—and the juniors, study groups evolve just on their own… [They're] holding each other accountable. "We gotta graduate. We're going to meet, and we're going to check in with each other. We're going to meet in the library." I just saw things happen. We gave some pushes, but for the most part, things just evolved and grew on their own, which is good—really good.

Another teacher felt that students encouraging one another to complete their school work had boosted academic achievement:

There definitely was an impact on grades because they were holding each other accountable, pushing each other… "You gotta get your homework done, what about this, what are you doing for the test?" There was this pulling, pulling, pulling. I definitely…saw that improvement.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING IN ACTION

Beginning in the second year of ESI, one school in the Bronx implemented a peer-led advisory program called Peer Group Connect, with the help of an external partner, the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS). According to the school's principal, the advisory program has "been a phenomenal experience for us and really something that's helped transform the culture of our school."

Funded through the ESI grant, CSS provided professional development for teachers, an advisory curriculum, and consulting to assist the school in developing its advisory program. First, CSS helped the school select a cohort of juniors and seniors to serve as peer advisors for incoming 9th grade students. Upperclassmen interested in a peer advisor position submitted an application. The teachers who would be working most closely with the program reviewed applications and selected students who they thought were the best fit.

Students who were selected were placed in a daily class, where they worked with teachers to prepare for weekly outreach sessions with 9th graders. The teachers who led the class for juniors and seniors had received professional development from CSS. They coached the peer advisors about group facilitation, the advisory curriculum, and the students' roles as advisors. Then, during each outreach session, two upperclassmen (one male, one female) facilitated a class of approximately 10 freshman. Each class focused on a specific topic, including peer pressure, time management, relationships, health issues, conflict resolution, social media, and bullying, among others. The principal emphasized that the most salient characteristic of Peer Group Connect was its focus on creating bonds between students.

> *It's about relationship building; it's about giving kids a space to talk about things outside of the context of adult-kid relationships. And it's about building community in a sense of kind of collective responsibility for the upper-class students to take care of the under-class students. And kind of vice versa, like this sense of accountability. You know, one of the indicators for me that the program has been successful is seeing 9th graders who will kind of straighten up a little bit and watch what they say when their peer leader is around them in the hallway.*

Teachers agreed that the program had a significant impact on their school culture, and emphasized the ways in which it challenged stereotypical ideas about how minority boys are supposed to interact. Explained one teacher:

> *Now we have 20 students [juniors and seniors] that are reaching out to 90 other students [freshmen]. To teach them that, okay, it's okay to be "soft" sometimes. It's okay to have some type of emotion…. As a male and especially a Latino or an African-American male, it's [often seen as] not okay to be like "oh this is wonderful and this is great." The emotions that we can express are anger or frustration… even just showing fear is seen as something that's weak. [So, we emphasize that] it's okay to show these emotions and to be compassionate.*

CHAPTER 5: PROVIDING EARLY SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS' POSTSECONDARY GOALS

Why Offer Early Support for College?

While high school graduation rates have continued to rise for Black and Latino young men, evidence suggests that very few of these students are leaving high school well prepared for college (Villavicencio, Bhattacharya, & Guidry, 2013). Nationally, 70 percent of White students who graduate from high school in four years enroll in college, compared with only 55 percent of Black and 60 percent of Latino high school graduates (Ransom & Lee, 2012). Black and Latino males who do enroll in college are often required to take remedial classes, which is troubling because less than a quarter of students in remedial college coursework end up graduating within eight years of enrollment (Bailey & Cho, 2010). These patterns contribute to large gaps in college degree attainment: As of 2011, only 26 percent of Black males and 18 percent of Latino males in the United States earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 41 percent of students overall (Ransom & Lee, 2012).

Many Black and Latino males face particular obstacles on the pathway to college, including a lack of knowledge about the requirements and process for getting there. Educators in ESI schools reported that while they had always provided college support in the 11th and 12th grade, this was frequently too late. They said that many of their Black and Latino male students had aspirations to go to college, but were unaware of the steps they needed to take to enroll. When the time came to apply, many found that they were missing basic requirements. Some students struggled with other barriers, including a belief that college is not for them, financial hardship, and a lack of skills needed for college success. One teacher reflected, "They're unaware of a lot of things relating to what college entails. They say, 'I'm not going to spend the rest of my life paying back loans.'" Addressing students' real and perceived obstacles—and doing so early in students' high school careers—was a central part of a larger strategy aimed at improving college access and success.

Early College Support in ESI Schools

Given ESI's core goals, it is not surprising that many participating schools used ESI resources to provide early exposure to and awareness of college. Indeed, 19 ESI schools reported beginning to expose students to college in 9th grade, often by providing students with the opportunity to go on college visits and by helping them set specific college-related goals. A principal described:

> I think getting everybody to realize that if we start planting those seeds early, that then it becomes part of the whole school culture rather than just suddenly 11th and 12th [grades] now

you start working on it. So many of us have worked with 11th graders who, in the second semester, are like, "Oh, I want to go to this school," and they think that they're going to pull their GPA up by 12th grade, and it's heartbreaking to have those conversations. I think when we all, as a staff, talk about everything like that, it helped everybody realize that we'd have to start at an earlier grade.

Fifteen schools also provided supports focused on the concrete steps involved in applying for college. Specific supports included mandatory classes or workshops about college requirements and the college application process; PSAT/SAT preparation; instruction and support for filling out the FAFSA and applications to City University of New York (CUNY) colleges; and help

Related Resources

- **Assignment: College Admissions Presentations (Page 39)**

- **Family Income Form (Page 41)**

obtaining recommendation letters, selecting colleges based on GPA and SAT scores, and getting loans or financial aid. One teacher said, "We get kids comfortable and used to the fact that applying for college is a process and that teachers are there to help implement it." Breaking the college application process into smaller steps also helps make it less intimidating for students. As one teacher said:

They need a lot of hand-holding through the college process. It's not familiar to them. They're often the first in their families to go to college, and it's a Byzantine process. For the best of students, with the best of support, it's overwhelming. A lot of them, it's too hard. They just kind of crumple in denial. We try to keep them away from denial and say, "Let's just get it done."

Finally, ESI schools have focused on providing academic supports that keep students on track for college. For example, six schools have provided intensive Regents exam preparation (through Saturday school, extended days, etc.), aimed at helping students score well enough on the test that they can avoid having to take remedial classes.[5] Nine schools have ramped up SAT preparation offerings. Staff in eight schools reported increasing the rigor of instruction through such strategies as modifying course sequencing and programming so that students take four years of math and science; focusing writing instruction on college-level writing and research papers; and partnering with higher education institutions that allow high school students to take college classes and earn college credit. As one principal put it, the goal of these efforts was to support "Black and Latino boys to not just get into college, but to come out through the door with a degree."

School staff also acknowledged that while some aspects of college readiness are academic in nature, others involve "soft" skills, such as knowing how to talk to your professor or find the resources you need on campus. One principal described a program designed to teach these "soft skills":

We do a program called "Success by Degrees." That program really empowers students to be more prepared to take on college by teaching them those tangential skills that students would need to be successful in college. For example, goal setting, time management, those types of skills… We do notice that students are, especially the ones in the ESI cohorts coming through, they know more about that, "these are the goals that I have to set."

Greater College Awareness among Teachers and Students

As a result of the early college supports described above, staff in ESI schools reported two major shifts: First, a change among teachers who have collectively raised the bar from high school graduation to college, and second, a growing belief among students that college is for them.

Shift in expectations from high school graduation to college readiness. Educators in 24 ESI schools reported that, in their school, staff have consciously changed their focus from ensuring that students graduate high school to making sure that students are ready for college. All staff—not only college counselors—now regularly communicate with students about progress toward college. One teacher said:

As a faculty, we're more on the same page. We definitely understand the importance of promoting a college-going culture, which was not the case three years ago. As much as we wanted kids to go to college, we didn't understand how little they knew about college. Now I think as a faculty we're very clear. Our kids need more college talk to get them ready to go.

Staff communicate the college-focused mission to students regularly through formal events and structures (e.g., college days, bulletin boards with college banners and acceptance letters) and informal conversations about college. One principal said, "It's always a conversation. '*When* you go to college. *When* you go to college.' Really drilling in for students that the goal is college."

This focus on college has also changed the expectations students have for themselves. For example, one teacher explained that students are now asking to retake Regents tests that they passed so that they could earn a score high enough to place out of remedial coursework at a CUNY school. The teacher cited this as a new behavior, which didn't happen before ESI.

Increased sense of belonging in college. As described above, many ESI schools offered college trips or opportunities to take classes at local colleges. Schools were intentional about exposing students not only to local CUNY schools (as they had before ESI), but also schools outside of New York City or State, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and to a lesser extent, Ivy League schools. Staff reported that college trips—especially those to HBCUs—were "eye openers" for students who typically don't leave their neighborhood/borough and whose parents/extended family may not have attended college. One principal recalled a student saying, after a trip to a college outside of NYC:

"Wow, I never knew we could go there!" These experiences allowed students to see other Black and Latino males attending college and imagine themselves as college students. These experiences stood in direct contrast to some of the negative stereotypes students associate with being young men of color. One principal explained:

> *I think if you don't grow up in an environment where [college] is a reality, you don't know what to imagine…. You don't know what it looks like. Being able to go on college tours, being able to speak with people that look like them, that still have swag, that are still cool, that still use some of the lingo that they use but are successful out there making money and doing something productive, I think gives them an idea of… "Oh, okay, so that's what life after high school, if I can make it out of high school, is going to look like."*

Being able to see themselves in college has also led students to be more conscientious about short-term goals associated with college enrollment. As one staff member described:

> *It was acceptable initially for a student [to say…] "I passed the Regents; I got a 65." Now with the emphasis in ESI on that college and career readiness… they are more attuned to the fact of "I know I'm going to graduate, but now I want to graduate and be prepared and to be successful in college, so that 65 or 55—it's not acceptable anymore." They'll tell you, "I got a 70, I failed. I have to retake it." It's kind of amusing to outsiders to hear that, because they're saying, "70 isn't failing!" But our kids know that if you don't get a certain score, you're not as likely to be college and career ready. That was definitely a cultural shift.*

One ESI school has gone to great lengths to help students envision themselves in college. Educators in this school hope that increasing college awareness will help students approach academics with a greater sense of purpose. According to one teacher, "A lot of our [Black and Latino] male students have bought into the narrative and stereotype that education isn't for them, that they don't need go to college." To counteract this belief, the school uses a variety of strategies including college visits, college preparation workshops, alumni panels on student experiences in college, and "College Fridays" (when teachers wear apparel from the college they attended). Conversations about college, reinforced with visual reminders around the school, are designed to help Black and Latino students see themselves as succeeding, both academically and in their careers.

This school organizes visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)—a strategy that staff see as particularly valuable. Even if students ultimately do not enroll in an HBCU, the visits enable students to see themselves as part of a larger community of young people of color in college. The school staff has led trips of approximately 20 students each (including 9th-12th graders) to Morgan State, Delaware State, and Howard Universities.

Educators in the school noted that it is useful for their students to discuss college with near peers. While on these trips, the school enlists the help of recent college alumni or currently enrolled students. Alumni of the high school who now attend HBCUs have served as tour guides on college visits, engaging in frank discussions with visiting students on such topics as campus life, balancing classes with other responsibilities, and academic requirements. One teacher reported:

> I think the biggest success was the college tours... A lot of students, especially when they go as freshmen and sophomores, come back to school ready to start working because they get see the larger picture. They see themselves able to reach other places, and want to go to other places.

In addition to these efforts to help students see themselves in college, the school also aims to share information about various college options and help students navigate the application process, beginning early in high school. For example, the school holds student assemblies about different kinds of institutions (e.g., local or out-of-state), possible areas of study, and extracurricular interests (e.g., athletics, fraternities/sororities, etc.). According to one staff member: "The assemblies serve two purposes: to introduce and reinforce the "going to college" mindset and gauge students' [specific] interests for post-secondary plans and subsequent life."

As a form of early college awareness, 12th grade students at this school participate in an assignment where they prepare a presentation about a college they applied to, including information about admission requirements, academic programs, extra-curricular activities available at the school, and more. They then

deliver their presentation to younger students at the school, exposing their younger classmates to information about specific colleges.

One student said:

> [N]early all of our classes at some point, whether it be freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior year, whether it be science, math, or English, all of our teachers understand that we are on the journey to go to college at one point [and] the goal is somewhere out of high school. They all share that knowledge with us so that we can go further to the best of our ability.

Collectively, these efforts help students envision themselves in college by providing concrete experiences on college campuses and creating opportunities for them to be specific about their postsecondary plans.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

ESI schools have used a number of approaches to shift their school culture, with a particular focus on improving the high school experience for Black and Latino young men. These include efforts to incorporate culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, to adopt restorative approaches to student discipline, to build and nurture key in-school relationships, and to provide early support for students' postsecondary goals.

In keeping with Peterson and Deal's definition of school culture cited above—as an "underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals built up over time"— our conversations with ESI educators pointed to several important underlying values that connect and help undergird the strategies described in this report:

Teaching as Reflective Practice

Most of the strategies we have described could not be implemented solely through top-down policies or external guidelines. For example, ESI educators emphasized that integrating culturally relevant education requires teachers to reflect upon their own identities, their experiences as students and how that may or may not map onto their teaching practice, and biases they may hold about male students of color. While district and school leadership can encourage culturally relevant curricula and instructional practices, the success of these strategies hinges on teachers' willingness to examine their own experiences and assumptions.

Similarly, restorative approaches to discipline require teachers to approach their work reflectively. Teachers reported thinking carefully about *why* their students are misbehaving and how to support them to be more successful. Some teachers reflected on how their own behavior may have contributed to conflict escalation with a student.

Taking Responsibility for Student Learning and Success

The idea that the onus for student learning and success falls, at least in large part, on teachers and school leaders is embedded in many of the strategies used by ESI schools to shift their culture. For example, when using restorative approaches to discipline, teachers took responsibility for learning who their students were inside and outside of school and developing relationships that they could then leverage to encourage positive student behavior and good choices. Similarly, when implementing CRE, teachers assumed responsibility for making their curriculum engaging and applicable to students' lives. These practices require teachers to learn who their students are and incorporate students' backgrounds and cultures into their classrooms.

Building on Student Strengths

Many of the practices described in this report intentionally build on student strengths. Culturally relevant education encourages teachers to identify and promote students' assets,

rather than blaming them for arriving in high school unprepared. Restorative approaches to discipline empower students to part of the solution when problems arise—for example, by training them to facilitate conflict resolution circles. Efforts to improve relationships through peer advisory and peer mentoring programs explicitly drew on students' leadership capabilities. The numerous ways the ESI schools featured in this report have built on the strengths of their students stand in stark contrast to the deficit perspective that prevails in many schools that serve low-income students of color, where the focus often is on the disadvantages these students face.

Final Thoughts

Teaching as reflective practice, taking responsibility for student learning and success, and building on student strengths are principles that cut across the various strategies discussed in this report. Together, these principles underline the deep work that is required to shift school culture. Changing teacher and school leaders' orientations is no small accomplishment.

While these shifts in school culture require tremendous effort, they also hold promise for creating enduring changes in schools. In the case of ESI, it may be impossible to continue offering certain afterschool programs or out-of-state college visits when dedicated funding runs out, but deeper shifts in the fabric of schools are potentially more durable. While turnover among teachers and administrators is always a challenge, institutional changes, such as new curricular materials or the development of professional learning committees, have the potential to outlive the departure of particular staff members.

As noted in the introduction, we do not yet know whether the strategies described in this report will translate into measureable academic gains. But given the recognition that many young men of color feel alienated rather than embraced by their school, as well as growing evidence that school culture is related to student achievement, these strategies certainly bear closer examination. ESI educators perceive that these approaches have had positive results, including stronger relationships in schools, improved student behavior, reduced use of suspensions, and more awareness of college among Black and Latino males. As part of our ongoing evaluation of ESI, it will be important for the Research Alliance to systematically explore these areas, in addition to examining ESI's impact on academic outcomes (e.g., grades, graduation rates, college going). Have ESI schools in fact reduced the use of suspensions, for example? Do students in ESI schools report stronger relationships, more college knowledge, or more support for college-related goals than other students in similar high schools? Future Research Alliance reports will address these questions.

It is clear that educators have used ESI as an opportunity to focus deliberately on developing a school culture that welcomes and supports Black and Latino young men. We hope their experiences and perceptions offer valuable insight for other schools that are interested in the same goals.

The **Research Alliance** for
New York City Schools

Endnotes

[1] While "school culture" is one of the three core domains of ESI (in addition to academics and youth development; see Klevan, Villavicencio, and Wulach, 2013), we apply Peterson & Deal's definition of school culture throughout this report (see page 1.) For a comprehensive overview of the key components of ESI, including the theory of action driving the initiative and the launch of ESI through a competition-based Design Challenge, please refer to Klevan, Villavicencio, and Wulach, 2013.

[2] Please see Appendix B on page 43 for an overview of the qualitative data collection and analytic process.

[3] Referring to the shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed Black man, by a White police office in Ferguson, Missouri.

[4] A principal's suspension is a short term suspension (1-5 days) used for low-level infractions of the NYC DOE discipline code.

[5] Regents are New York State standardized examinations in core high school subjects which students must pass to earn a Regents Diploma. Students who do not meet a specific score cutoff on the English and math Regents exams have to take remedial courses at colleges in the City University of New York system.

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APPENDIX A: RELATED RESOURCES

Developing Culturally Relevant Education
Assignment: US Government Civil Rights Research Essay

Below is an essay assignment that asks students to research and analyze two reform movements and individual reformers from U.S. history.

Directions:

Write a well-organized research essay of two to four pages that includes an introduction, several paragraphs addressing the task below, and a conclusion. Essay must be typed and include a citation page or list of sources.

Theme:

Reform Movements and Reformers in the United States

Reform movements are intended to improve different aspects of American life by ensuring our constitutional and human rights are not denied to any group of individuals. Through the actions of individuals, organizations, or the government, the goals of these reform movements and reformers have often been achieved, but with varying degrees of success.

Task:

Identify two reform movements and two reformers that have had an impact on the rights of groups and individuals in America. For each:

- Discuss the background or context under which the movement emerged;
- Identify the factors that led to the formation and rise of the movement;
- Identify the actors and main leaders of the movement and the role they played;
- Describe at least two actions taken by the movements or individuals to achieve their rights;
- Evaluate the legacy of the two leaders or reformers; and
- Analyze the effects the movement had on their members and supporters and its impact on society.

You may use any reform movement or reformer from your study of United States history. The table on the next page can help organize your paper.

Civil Rights Project Organizer

	1	2	3	4
Name of Movement & Period				
Background/ Context				
Causes/ Rise Factors				
Action Taken				
Legacy of Leader(s)				
Effects/ Impact of Movement				

Adopting Restorative Approaches to Discipline
Program Description: Habits of Heart – Justice Panel Fact Sheet

The document below outlines the background, goals, and process for implementing Justice Panels, a method for responding to student infractions against the discipline code.

What are Justice Panels?

Restorative Justice Panels are made up of teams of students who meet with other students who have caused harm in the community through their infractions. The Panels' mission is to hold these students accountable for the effects of their actions on others. They discuss the circumstances and impact of infractions and ways the student can avoid making similar mistakes in the future.

What principles underlie Justice Panels?

- Focus on responsibility for action taken, instead of on broken rules.
- Focus on reasons, causes and feelings, not punishment and blame.
- Involve the wrongdoer in restoration, instead of deciding what must be done to the wrongdoer.
- Take greater consideration of the feelings of those harmed as well as the harmer.

When will Panels be held?

There will be three teams of 6-8 students who have one band of Panel in their schedule. They were chosen by guidance counselors based on various factors, and will have the same guidance counselor facilitating the Panel. The three panels will be available to hear cases during three bands a week.

How do situations arrive at Justice Panel?

Teachers can refer situations to Justice Panels. Deans will schedule the Panels and will include teachers if appropriate to the circumstance. Deans will also decide when additional situations would best be dealt with by Justice Panels.

What are the outcomes of Panels?

Currently we have four categories of sanctions that Panelists can consider to restore the infraction:

- Community service
- Written sanctions (essays, readings, letters of apology)
- Workshops (adult mediation, counseling, negotiations, peer mediation)
- Academic support/peer tutoring

Why Justice Panels?

- The student has a chance to directly work off his/her offense through some positive community action.
- The student is questioned about and can get to the deeper meaning of why certain behaviors occur.
- The student and his/her parents witness the care and concern of their community.
- Deans and administration have another tool to deal with various offenses.
- The student does not have to miss learning time because of suspensions.
- Student panel members are educated by the cases they hear; problems of other youth become clearer; they learn conflict resolution, decision-making skills and leadership skills and they experience the value of becoming more involved in their communities.

Promoting Strong Relationships in School
Event Description: Male Youth Empowerment Symposium

This school held a day-long symposium for all of the males enrolled in the school. Descriptions of the workshops can be found below.

Welcome to our school's second annual male empowerment day! This day was created because we felt a need to address some issues that our young men currently face or will face that we can't address in the classroom. When it comes to educating our future leaders, we have come to the realization that focusing on academics is not enough. It is not enough because success is not just built on reading, writing, and arithmetic. In order to be successful, we need to equip young men with knowledge about other facets of life. Our day of empowerment is designed to create an experience for young men of color that will catalyze them into becoming powerful, bold leaders.

<u>Panel Discussions</u>

Money is Power

This workshop will focus on the importance of learning the language of money and becoming financially literate. As an institution of education, we stress the importance of academics and scholarly achievement, while also fostering the social skills students need to navigate different careers. One area that is essential to the success of our students and community, but is at times overlooked, is teaching them to be financially responsible and savvy. This workshop will address financial literacy/planning and entrepreneurship.

Looking the Part

The title is self-explanatory; looking the part is vital in professional and personal lives. This workshop and panel discussion will take a two-pronged approach: First, it addresses the "dos" and "don'ts" of hygiene and dressing in business attire. Second, it discusses finding a career in the grooming and clothing industries.

Know Your Rights

As Black and Brown young men growing up in New York City, it is important to know your rights. With the prevalence of "Stop and Frisk," and our young brothers being the target of it, it is important we equip students with knowledge that will prevent them from being victims of the judicial system and becoming part of the prison-industrial complex. This panel discussion will center on informing

students of their rights under the law. It will also focus on dealing with racial profiling.

Life After High School

This panel will discuss several options students may be considering for careers after high school. Not all of our students want to go to college; some want to join the work force as soon as possible. This session will address some options for those students. Recent alumni from our school will also share their own different experiences after high school, in order to make life after high school more tangible for current students.

The Importance of Education

"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." – Malcolm X
Education has always been looked at as vital. However, when most people think about education, they think about grades, exams, and schools. This panel will examine education under a broader lens, trying to redefine education so students develop a desire to become life-long learners.

The Importance of Brotherhood

There is no explanation needed about the importance of unity. Without it, families, communities, and society would not survive the test of time. Most students understand the importance of unity, but some find it in the wrong places. Gangs and other individuals who do not have their best interests at heart can be tempting for some students craving unity. This panel will introduce students to positive organizations that give students a better option for being part of something great, and finding unity that will benefit many, not just themselves.

Providing Early Support for Students' Postsecondary Goals
Assignment: College Admissions Presentations

An assignment where students play the role of a college admissions counselor. They research a specific school and present about that school to classmates.

You are an admissions representative from a college/university (one that you or you and your partner have applied to) conducting admissions presentations to grades 9-11. No more than <u>TWO</u> people per class will be presenting the same college/university. If you choose to work alone, that is fine. The teacher and students in the class that you present to will receive a grading rubric to evaluate your presentation.

Please make sure that you are thorough with your research. Make sure that you are aware of admissions requirements (GPA, SAT, essays, interviews, etc.) and things that the college/university you are representing takes into consideration (community service, extracurricular activities etc.). Be aware of details including the tuition, room and board, location, possible personal expenses, graduation rate, etc. Below are some sample questions that students may ask you during your presentation.

<u>Sample Questions</u>:

1. How large are typical freshman courses?
2. How difficult is it to get in to your school?
3. What kinds of internships and/or study abroad experiences would be possible for me?
4. How many students from last year's graduating class went on to graduate schools?
5. Does this college/university give credit for courses taken on another campus?
6. How can I transfer if I attend a two year community college first? (Only asked if presentation is for a four year college/university)
7. What is student life like on campus? Are there clubs? Fraternities or sororities?
8. If I'm an athlete, how can I become involved on your campus? At the intercollegiate level? Intramurals?
9. What cultural or recreational opportunities are available in the area?
10. How far are you away from New York City and how can I get to and from campus?
11. What is the social and political atmosphere of the surrounding community? Do students ever become involved in town life? Are there opportunities for community service? If so, what are some examples?
12. Would you say that students that attend your college/university are generally happy? Why?
13. What kind of EOP/HEOP mandatory program is offered over the summer? When does it usually take place?
14. What are some of the best features of this college/university?
15. What are some of the challenges and even weaknesses of this college/university? Are there opportunities for students to work on making it better?

You might consider contacting the school's admissions office and telling them about this presentation, which will definitely stand out to them. Do not be afraid to ask them to send you materials to hand out to the students you present to. You will be required to use PowerPoint. On the date of your presentation you must dress appropriately.

COLLEGE PRESENTATIONS: TEAM AND SCHOOL CHOICE SHEET

Please detach this page from the assignment sheet and return to your teacher. Keep the assignment description sheet for your records and to assist you with any additional research.

The presentation choices of college/universities are on a **first come first served basis** so make your decisions quickly. For example, if one group is already presenting about the University of Albany, that will not be an option for you. You will have to choose another college/university to present.

NAME: _____

1. ARE YOU WORKING WITH A PARTNER?

o   YES
o   NO

2. WHO IS YOUR PARTNER?

_____
(Only **one** person needs to fill this out if you are working with a partner)

3. What is the name of the college/university that you/your partner will be presenting about? (If you are working with a partner, you may present about a school that only one of you has applied to. However, remember that this will require the person that did not apply to that college/university to do additional research in order to conduct your presentation properly/effectively.)

CHOICE 1: _____

CHOICE 2: _____

CHOICE 3: _____

Providing Early Support for Students' Postsecondary Goals
Family Income Form 2014-2015

One school sends this form to all families at the end of 11th grade, and again at the beginning of 12th grade if it had not been returned. The form asks families to provide information and permissions that will allow the school to work with students to complete the FAFSA and other college financial aid documents.

FAMILY INCOME FORM 2014-2015

Parents/Guardians: In order to best help you and your student develop his/her post-high school plan we need to know your family's annual income for 2013. Please fill this form out by looking at your 2013 income documents including the income tax form 1040/1040A/1040EZ, W2, 1099, 1722 or benefits statement. Please attach COPIES of these documents to this form. This form and the copies of the documents will help us determine eligibility for special programs and must be completed during Junior Year. Please contact me with any questions you have about this form.

STUDENT NAME:

_____ _____ _____
Last   First   MI

DATE OF BIRTH:
_____

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:
_____ _____ _____ - _____ _____ - _____ _____ _____ _____

Do you also have an Alien Registration Number? Yes No   Please supply the number: _____

Who does student live with?	**What is parents' marital status as of today?**	**Who claims this student on their taxes?**
❐ Both Parents	❐ Married/Remarried	❐ Both parents file together
❐ Mother	❐ Divorced/Separated	❐ Mother claims student
❐ There is a legal step-parent in the house	❐ Single	❐ Father claims student
❐ Father	❐ Widowed	❐ "Other" claims student:
❐ There is a legal step-parent in the house	❐ Never Married but biological	_____
❐ Legal Guardian	parents living together	❐ No one files taxes
❐ Other Relative_____		
❐ Other_____		

ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME for 2013 *(See last pay stub or W2)*   **Complete all that apply**

_____ Work Income from Mother (including guardian or legal step-mother), *before taxes*
  total per year

_____ Work Income from Father (including guardian or legal step-father), *before taxes*
  total per year

_____ Work Income from Student, *before taxes*
  total per year

_____ Work Income from other family members, *total before taxes*
  total per year

Other sources of Income:

_____ Total per year
  OR   Social Security (household total)
_____ Total per month

_____ Total per year
  OR   Public Assistance (household total)
_____ Total per month

_____ Total per year
  OR   Other (Unemployment, Pension, Child Support, Investments, Rental Property)
_____ Total per month
    Where is this "other" income from? _____

Do you own your own home or apartment?   _____   _____
                                         Yes   No

NOTE: All of the information you provide will remain confidential and placed in the student's college file in a secure location. Please call if you have any concerns about confidentiality.

FORM CONTINUES ON BACK→

MEMBERS OF HOUSEHOLD (List below every person claimed on taxes or living with you):

	Name (First & Last)	Claimed on taxes?	Age	Is he/she working?	Relationship to Student
1.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____ student _____
	SLJ Student				
2.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
	Parent/guardian 1				
3.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
	Parent/guardian 2				
4.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____
8.	_____	☐	_____	_____	_____

Please list any additional members of the household in the space below.

Please use this space to explain any additional family circumstances, financial situation, recent loss of job, or other information important for the College and Career Center to know.

Person Who Prepared this form:

_____   _____
Please print name   *Please sign name*

Parent Phone #1: _____   **Parent Phone #2:** _____
                              (home, cell, or work)   (home, cell, or work)

APPENDIX B: DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS METHODS

This appendix describes the data sources and analytic processes used to develop the findings in our report *Strategies for Improving School Culture*. The report draws on the implementation study we are conducting as part of our evaluation of the implementation of ESI in 40 NYC high schools, as well as in-depth case studies in five ESI schools.

Data Sources

Implementation Study

The implementation study was designed to examine how ESI programming took shape across the 40 participating schools by collecting information about specific programs as well as perspectives from key ESI stakeholders about their experiences with the initiative and challenges encountered throughout the implementation process. This report specifically uses data from the third year of our ESI evaluation (the 2014-2015 school year).

We collected the bulk of our Year 3 implementation data in the spring of 2015. Researchers collected data from all ESI schools through the following activities:[*]

1. A 60-minute focus group with the principal and ESI liaison (the staff member at each ESI school charged with leading ESI implementation;
2. A 45-minute focus group with three to five 11th-grade teachers;[**] and
3. A structured questionnaire completed by the principal or ESI liaison about the details of ESI programming at his or her school.

All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and later transcribed. The conversations were semi-structured, in that researchers were expected to cover a defined set of questions but were also encouraged to depart from the protocol if they felt it would yield valuable data. Our protocols included questions about overall impressions of ESI, implementation challenges, and approaches to educating Black and Latino young men, among other topics.

These activities were designed to gain the perspectives of various stakeholders, each with a distinct role to play in ESI. Principals and liaisons maintained budgetary oversight, developed ESI workplans, and worked to ensure that all the components of ESI programming fit together, while teachers were primarily involved in the implementation of specific programs.

Case Studies

The report also draws on interviews and observations conducted as part of case studies in five ESI schools during the 2014-2015 school year. The case study schools were selected by

researchers and ESI central staff to create a diverse cross-section of ESI schools (based on borough representation, admissions criteria, etc.) as well as factors including principal continuity and the fidelity and intensity of ESI implementation. Across those schools, we conducted 17 in-depth interviews/focus groups with school leaders, program leaders, and students as well as 22 observations of ESI programs. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and later transcribed. Data collection in case study schools was designed to delve into particularly promising, innovative strategies and lessons about school implementation.

Data Analysis

We used an iterative, multi-step process to analyze transcripts of interviews and focus groups conducted in ESI schools. Each researcher completed a reflection memo for each interview, focus group, or observation he or she conducted, which summarized educators' responses to our questions. These reflection memos allowed the team to develop a list of themes, and later codes, with which to analyze the transcript data. In the case of both the implementation study and case study transcripts, initial code lists were piloted and revised multiple times. After transcripts were coded, researchers wrote additional memos, noting and recommending prominent codes to be further analyzed based on frequency (e.g., college and career supports) or salience to the ESI theory of action (e.g., culturally relevant education), or both (e.g., race, gender, relationships). Based on these recommendations, the team conducted a closer reading of the related transcript data related and wrote brief memos which summarized the highlights of each theme.

This analytic process was developed to lead researchers from initial reflections about how ESI operated in individual schools to the identification and fine-grained analysis of major themes across schools. This allowed us to focus on important insights, closely analyze the responses of educators, and identify patterns highlighted in this particular report.

*40 schools were initially selected to participate in ESI, but only 39 remained in the program in Year 3.

** In each year of implementation, ESI adds a grade to its target population. In Year 1, programming was primarily provided to 9th graders. In Year 2, ESI programming was provided to 9th *and* 10th graders. In Year 3, the target population included 9th-11th graders. The 11th graders had been exposed to all three years of ESI programming. For this reason, we interviewed 11th grade teachers in Year 3.

The Research Alliance for New York City Schools

285 Mercer Street, 3rd Floor | New York, New York 10003-9502
212 992 7697 | 212 995 4910 fax
research.alliance@nyu.edu | www.steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance

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